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BOOK REVIEWS

PLATONISM. PAUL ELMER MORE. Princeton University Press. 1917.
Pp. ix, 307. \$1.75.

This book will claim attention from a wide circle of readers, not only for the interest which all thinking men have in Platonism, the most pregnant product of ancient Greek thought, but also because the present volume comes from one of our foremost American critics, whose past studies, literary and philosophic, have ranged from ancient India and Greece to the present time and place. Therefore we turn to this interpretation of the elusive master with happy anticipations, eager to see what Plato's thought may mean to a non-professional scholar, for we know that such may sometimes give a fairer and more edifying interpretation than the professional, whose thought may have been confined within too narrow bounds. And it should be stated here at the outset that Dr. More does not disappoint us. He knows the Platonic dialogues well, and, in spite of a few slips in interpretation, we may add that he knows them accurately. Naturally many will differ from him on this point or on that, but such differences are inevitable when we are dealing with a writer like Plato, whose dialogues are graceful, suggestive, and alluring, not formal, schematic, and final. Happily Plato's quest for the truth was never ended, and therefore we have no definitive Platonic system. Every interpretation must be partial; every interpreter, as Dr. More aptly says, "has no other measure than his own capacity."

The nine chapters of this volume are made up from five lectures delivered at Princeton University in October and November, 1917, on the Vanuxem Foundation, with the addition of much material which could not be included in the oral presentation. Little is said of Plato's views on education, art, and politics, but the attention is centred on Plato's ethical theme. This subject involves a discussion of the aims of Socrates, of the relation of Plato to his master, of Plato's doctrine of ideas, his science and cosmogony, and finally of his metaphysics. In an appendix Dr. More summarizes in useful fashion his own ideas as to the proper sequence of Plato's works. It is perhaps ungracious, where so much is given, to regret that we have

not more; but the reviewer cannot help feeling that if the author had sketched the political, social, and intellectual environment in which Plato grew up, and had thus given him his historical background, the present book would have gained in value; for exalted as Plato now appears to us, and great as he was in his own day, he was nevertheless the child — the noblest child, we shall gladly grant — of his time, and his philosophy becomes the more intelligible as we understand the factors of which it was composed and the conditions which stimulated him to construct it.

Dr. More begins his work with a discussion of the three "Socratic theses," the three impulses which, to our author's mind, carried Socrates toward philosophy. These he defines as follows: "an intellectual scepticism, a spiritual affirmation, and a tenacious belief in the identity of virtue and knowledge." The scepticism of Socrates is shown to have been no merely negative doubt as to the possibility of truth and reality, such as it was in the case of Pyrrho and others — whom we must recognize, nevertheless, as not wholly illegitimate children of Socratic teaching; but it was rather an intellectual habit of examining all things, that by examination the seeker might arrive at clearer and more positive notions. It is true that at first sight there seems to be much in common between the Socratic "scepticism" and the Sophistic doctrine of relativity; but the latter led to negative results, while the former, if often in the Platonic dialogues it reaches no conclusion, is always aiming at positive ends — at the attainment of concepts of universal validity, and at the elevation of human life. To his passion for inquiry Socrates added a faith in the validity of his intuitions concerning morality and religion; and when Plato's reader is impatient with Socrates' tantalizing failure to draw the conclusions which he desires, he is still bound to remember that Socrates was positive-minded; that however much pleasure this vexer of men's complacency might apparently have in showing up his subject's ignorance and in confessing his own, there were fundamental matters on which he had no doubts; nor did any arise in his mind when at the crisis of his life he faced his judges; for although he cheerfully confessed that he did not know whether the death he was facing might not prove a blessing instead of a misfortune, he boldly affirmed that he did know that it was an evil and a shameful thing to do wrong and to disobey one's superior, whether god or man; and that therefore he would never be afraid of things which might prove in the end to be good, nor would he ever flee from such rather than from the evils which he knew were evils and nothing else (*Apol.* 29 B).

Again the positive character of the Socratic quest appears in the thesis which Dr. More defines as "a belief in the identity of virtue and knowledge." At first hearing this sounds like a mere paradox, but due consideration of the evidence proves that Socrates held knowledge in the moral field to be that certainty which is attained by reasoning on the pleasures and pains of life. When a man rationalizes the springs of conduct by weighing the near and remote consequences of his acts, he is in a fair way to acquire prudence in action, that is, to be virtuous. If we willingly grant that this is utilitarianism, we shall also maintain that it is a rationalized and ennobled utilitarianism. After all, was not philosophy from Socrates' day largely *ars vivendi*, which is equivalent to saying that it was ethical? Utilitarian need not always be an adjective of condemnation.

The inconsistency between this utilitarian thesis and the Socratic scepticism and spiritual intuition is one which Dr. More wisely does not attempt to overlook or brush aside, and he makes a timely protest against letting the rationalistic Socrates overshadow the sceptical searcher and the religious intuitionist. Gomperz at one extreme has reduced Socrates to the rank of a rationalistic teacher of the unity of virtue and knowledge; Burnet at the other extreme would attribute to Socrates most of Plato's philosophy. Dr. More steers a middle course and restores to us an historic Socrates, a human being, who stirred both the minds and the emotions of those who listened to him. Systems he left for his followers to develop.

By the "Platonic Quest" Dr. More understands a development of the spiritual affirmation and the belief in the identity of virtue and knowledge which was marked in Socrates' thought and teaching; Plato gives a rational justification to this belief, and so proves that virtue and happiness are inseparable. That justification is the theme of the chapter in which Dr. More discusses many important parts of the *Republic*. In his treatment of the different forms of the State there are occasionally points at which we might note exceptions, but in general the discussion is accurate and illuminating. Plato's aim in his great dialogue is clearly shown to be the profound commonplace, approved by the common sense of mankind, that justice alone secures happiness and that injustice inevitably dooms man to misery. Thus Plato by his arguments justifies the affirmation of the spirit before reason, and shows himself content to rest on the knowledge thus secured as the principle of life.

Such a conclusion as this depends, of course, on Plato's (or was it Socrates') sharp distinction between knowledge and opinion, happiness and pleasure. Whether it is not somewhat confusing to call

the recognition of these distinctions a dualism may be questioned, for this is a term of such wide applicability (*cf.* p. 123) that it tempts us to overwork it. Again we might complain with a certain justice that in his chapter on Plato's psychology Dr. More sometimes uses inexactly modern equivalents for the faculties and functions of Plato's tripartite $\psi\chi\dot{\eta}$; and again perhaps he attributes to Plato a clearer concept of the unity of personality than the dialogues warrant.

The Platonic "ideas" Dr. More divides into two main categories, the rational and the ethical. In the first are included mathematical forms, genera or species of natural things, or of manufactured objects (the square or cube, man or horse, table or chair); in the latter category we must place such ideas as justice, virtue, *et cetera*. The abstract ideas, as we call them, which deal with ethics, were in all probability Plato's first and main interest (p. 171); that is to say, he was brought to his doctrine by ethical rather than by logical considerations. Dr. More could well have quoted Aristotle (*Meta.* 987 b) in partial support of his views, although to the reviewer's mind a strong argument can be made for the opposite contention. Be that as it may, Plato clearly held in his maturity to both ethical ideas and ideas of natural classes and of manufactured objects, and maintained that all the ideas had existence anterior to the individual objects and exterior to the human mind; in other words, that reality was found only in the ideas. Thus Plato secured a firm foundation for his ethical system by finding virtue's warrant in the immutable reality of the ideas. Moreover, he frequently treats the ideas of beauty, justice, and righteousness as intimately united, and thus intentionally, or unwittingly, confuses aesthetics and ethics. But from this confusion, whatever its cause, Plato secures for the individual a great impulse towards goodness, for by the contemplation of ideal beauty one is drawn to love the idea of goodness, and so to become good himself.

When Dr. More explains the true Platonic ideas (p. 182) as the "imaginative projections of the facts of moral consciousness," one is tempted to question whether he is not attributing to Plato a conscious process which hardly belonged to him. The development of the doctrine of ideas or forms had a long history before Plato, and it seems not improbable that his predecessors, *e.g.*, the Pythagoreans, as well as Plato himself, arrived at their notions by intuitive bounds fully as much as by inductive processes. Perhaps this is what Dr. More means by his expression "imaginative projections"; if so, the reviewer must plead guilty to dullness of apprehension.

Space requires us to discuss briefly the chapter on Science and Cosmogony. By Plato's Science Dr. More means intellectual dialectic which deals with things of time and space, and which attempts to determine the reality behind the individual phenomena. By a discussion of parts of the *Republic*, involving the familiar distinction between opinion and knowledge, and the curricula of studies for the ideal State, he comes to his conclusion that, in Plato's view, the value of Science lay in the training which it furnished for the true philosophic life; that is to say, Science is the means of the soul's ascent. The treatment of Science leads inevitably to the *Timæus*, in which the story of creation is set forth, not clearly — for the course was hardly clear to Plato — but with a constant recognition of the presence in the cosmos of two factors — the divine element and brute necessity. The former works in the higher sphere, and is now thought of as the supreme Ideal or, more personally, as God; the other element, Necessity, *ἀνάγκη*, in the *Timæus* corresponds in general to the Infinite or the Unlimited, *τὸ ἀπειρον*, of the *Philebus*. This is the substratum from which the Demiurge and his subordinates create the sensible world. The understanding of Plato's concept of Necessity, *ἀνάγκη*, Dr. More would make the touchstone to determine the true Platonist. He defines it as "the resistance of the meaningless and incomprehensible flux of things, whether in nature or the human soul, to the government of order and happiness." But as Goodness is at once the motive and the end of God's action, which introduces order into the formless and disordered substratum, therefore the divine Reason orders the world toward Goodness, in so far as Necessity allows. Thus Plato's cosmogony is teleological.

In his chapter on Metaphysics, Dr. More discusses the puzzling problem of the *Parmenides*. He reviews the many types of interpretation which the past century has brought forth, and rejects them all; but he stands closest to Gomperz. With him Dr. More agrees that the attack on every form of doctrine of Ideas is conducted with relentless logic and rigor. What then are we to say of Plato's obstinate adherence to the doctrine which logic has demolished? Dr. More replies that Plato accepts "the reality of Ideas as a necessity of inner experience" so cogent that the assaults of logic cannot shake our faith in them. Viewed thus, the dialogue becomes a defense of Plato's system.

Finally, in his conclusion, Dr. More acutely deals with the influence of Platonism, especially of Platonism misunderstood, in religion and philosophy, devoting most attention to the English Platonists. His exposition of the relation between romanticism and the

perverted doctrine of Plato is interesting and important. The test for him of the long line of pseudo-Platonists is that they lay hold of all the "imaginative and emotional elements of Platonism, but forget that the spiritual affirmation speaks from a dark recess of the soul." The true Platonist, on the other hand, knows that the divine spirit, like Socrates' *dæmon*, always speaks to check and inhibit, never in positive commands; only the false sectary imagines that the spirit bids him follow his desires and so turn liberty into license. If Dr. More is right here, and the reviewer believes that he is, his words deserve the careful consideration of every one who earnestly desires a guide to righteousness.

We have given so much space to this book because we believe that it is one of much importance to the readers of this REVIEW. Although some clergymen appear to feel that they have been called to everything save theology, the one subject which should be the intellectual basis of their calling, still theology remains the queen of the sciences; and no Greek thinker had so much influence on Christian thought as Plato. Therefore we commend to them the study of Dr. More's work.

Yet one curse must be pronounced upon it: *damnentur omnes qui indices omittunt.*

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LIBERAL JUDAISM AND HELLENISM. CLAUDE G. MONTEFIORE. Macmillan & Co. 1918. Pp. xi, 328. 6s.

It is easy to define neither religion nor any organized expression of it. Even orthodoxy is constantly changing. Conservative Judaism is not what it was a century ago, while Mr. Montefiore's Liberal Judaism was then unknown. Jews have no authoritative ecclesiastical body to determine their creed or dictate their conduct, so that while on certain fundamentals all are agreed, Judaism for most of them is a matter of individual interpretation. Hence the warrant for Mr. Montefiore's attempt to define Liberal Judaism. It is not his first essay in this field. What is known as Reform Judaism began in Germany in the early part of the nineteenth century. Today the movement, strong as it is in America, knows little following in Europe. Judaism throughout Europe is most conservative. But Mr. Montefiore for a generation at least has been championing the cause of a liberal interpretation of his faith. In 1903 he published